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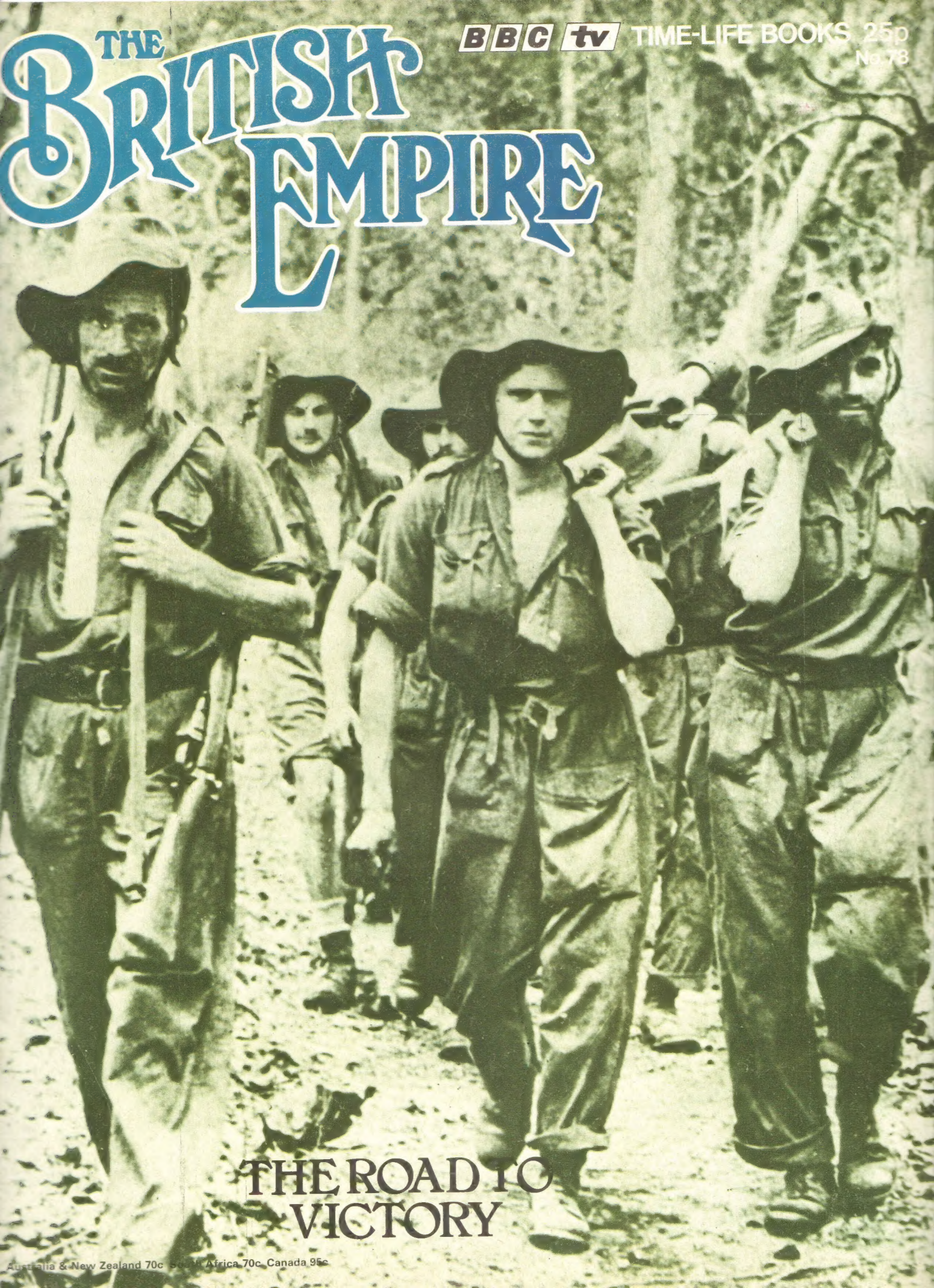

THE ROAD TO VICTORY

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THE BRITISH EMPIRE

BBC tv TIME-LIFE BOOKS 25p
No. 78

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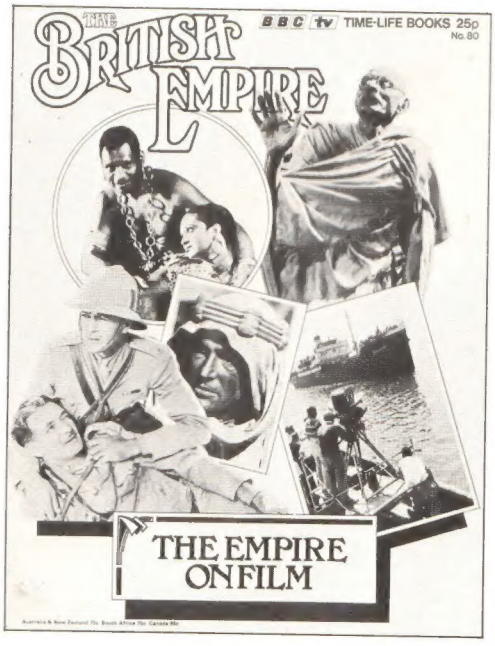

CONTENTS

2157. **1943-45 The Road to Victory**
By the beginning of 1943 Empire forces were on the offensive, chasing the remnants of Rommel's shattered Afrika Korps into Tunisia and striking back against the Japanese in Burma.

2164. **The Lion Trainer**
An unorthodox and dynamic military commander, General Orde Wingate, leads a legendary force of jungle fighters – the Chindits – against the Japanese.

2172. **The Other War**
Churchill is caricatured in Japanese propaganda leaflets smuggled into India, while Australia wages its own war of words against the Japanese invaders in New Guinea.

2176. **Operation Overlord**
British, Canadian and American forces storm their way ashore at Normandy after the greatest amphibious operation in history.

Cover: Tattered Chindits bearing a comrade wounded in the guerrilla war against the Japanese in Burma symbolize the courage and endurance of the Empire's fighting men.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

1943-45 THE ROAD TO VICTORY

The fall of Singapore in February, 1942, was a grievous blow to the Empire. But soon, however, imperial forces were striking back in the East, where the Chindits won a legendary reputation. And in Britain, democracy's forces gathered for the final onslaught against Germany. But in her moment of triumph, Britain found that her days as a great power were over

NEWS CHRONICLE, Monday, February 16, 1942

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News Chronicle

No. 29,882 MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1942 RADIO PAGE 2 ONE PENNY

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SINGAPORE FALLS: PREMIER SPEAKS

Japs Say Surrender Was Unconditional, British Surrounded

THE JAPANESE HIGH COMMAND YESTERDAY ANNOUNCED THE UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER OF SINGAPORE—A WEEK ALMOST TO THE HOUR FROM THE TIME THEIR TROOPS CROSSED THE JOHORE STRAIT.

The terms of surrender were signed, said Tokio ... A. E. Percival, G.O.C., Singapore ...

MALAYA, MALACCA, Johore Bharu, SINGAPORE, Bukit Batu, DJIMAJA, TAMBILAN Is., BORNEO, CHINA

"LET US MOVE FORWARD STEADFASTLY INTO THE STORM AND THROUGH THE STORM"—Churchill

NEW YORK Herald Tribune LATE CITY EDITION

THE WEATHER Today: Rain and Warmer ... Detailed Report on Page 23

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1942

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...TISH TROOPS ...E SINGAPORE

IN JAVA, BERLIN

PARIS 14 Rond-Point des Champs-Elysées Edition de Lyon

LE FIGARO

En page 4, LE FIGARO " ACTUALITES "

DIRECTEUR : Pierre BRISSON

VENDREDI 13 FEVRIER 1942 1 franc 117e ANNEE

Le Maréchal PÉTAIN

Royauté

BIEN que nous soyons depuis vingt mois hors de la lutte, l'effroyable guerre qui dévaste le monde nous atteint encore dans ses remous. La perte au loin, dans un port étranger, du paquebot «Normandie» est un coup dont nous ressentons à la fois l'étendue et l'amertume. Ce bâtiment était l'orgueil, non seulement de notre flotte commerciale, mais de notre production nationale. La science, la technique, l'art, le goût, tout avait fait de ce puissant et merveilleux navire une sorte de chef-d'œuvre français. Nous avons trop souvent ...

On confirme à Tokio :

La ville de Singapour et les installations du port de commerce sont aux mains des Japonais

Mais une grande bataille ... au centre de l'île

DE PARIS AU VILLAGE

DE JEUNES HOMMES

SUR LE FRONT GERMANO-RUSSE

...S ALLEMANDES ...S ET CROATES ... leur offensive ...eur du Donetz

Berliner Ausgabe

Berlin, Donnerstag, 12. Februar 1942

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Kampfblatt der nationalsozialistischen Bewegung Großdeutschlands

Ein furchtbarer Schlag für das Empire

So wurde Singapur erstürmt!

... den Sieg der Japaner

By Alan Clark

The spring of 1942 was a dark and cloudy season for the British Empire. Driven by the Japanese from Malaya, Singapore and Burma, assailed by the fear of external invasion and internal revolt in India, and forced into ignominious retreat in North Africa, the Empire gritted its teeth and waited for the whirlwind to descend. Remarkably, it passed by.

The coming of the monsoon in Burma ended the immediate threat of a land invasion of India and American carrier actions in the Coral Sea seriously blunted Japanese offensive capacity. In North Africa, Rommel was forced to delay his planned final offensive against the British Eighth Army because of the Fuehrer's determination to concentrate German resources on the conquest of Russia.

Such reprieves, however, brought little comfort to Winston Churchill. His physician, Lord Moran, has written: "My diary for 1942 has the same backcloth to every scene: Winston's conviction that his life as Prime Minister could be saved only by victory in the field." But where could victory be sought? The American view was that only a direct attack on the continent of Europe could bring the war to a decisive end and that even if this was not practicable in 1942, given the acute shortage of landing-craft and lack of trained American divisions, Allied resources should be conserved for an attack no later than 1943.

Anxious to secure a military victory as soon as possible, Churchill urged the Americans to invade French North Africa, optimistically believing that if the Vichy forces decided to fight, they would offer only token resistance. There was also a powerful strategic case to be made for an Allied seizure of North Africa. Mastery of the Mediterranean would bring obvious advantages and any diversion of German forces to help the Italians would relieve pressure on the Russian front.

But for the sake of Empire prestige, Churchill was determined that the Eighth Army should score its own success against Rommel's Afrika Korps and throughout April and May, 1942, he badgered General Sir Claude Auchinleck, Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, to take the offensive. Auchinleck, however, preferred to wait and at the end of May Rommel struck first, fighting the Eighth Army to a standstill at the height of the hottest African summer for 40 years.

While Churchill was in Washington in June, again urging the Americans to invade North Africa, the fortress of Tobruk fell and 38,000 men, the majority of them South Africans, surrendered. The Prime Minister had been hoping to tempt the Americans with a spectacular Empire victory in the Western Desert. But now the Americans were even less inclined to commit themselves to a full-scale invasion outside Europe. The only consolation Churchill could gain was the diversion of 300 Sherman tanks and 100 self-propelled American guns to Egypt.

With the Eighth Army slogging in retreat across 300 miles of desert to El Alamein, the last position before the River Nile, Churchill returned home to face a House of Commons censure debate and increasingly vocal and widespread public support for a "Second Front" – i.e. a frontal assault on the French Channel coast. The Prime Minister easily routed his Parliamentary critics, but the pressure for a Second Front was harder to deal with. The performance of the Red Army, fighting more or less single-handedly against the Germans, had aroused universal admiration in Britain; Press lords who had once sounded stentorian warnings about the "Red Menace" now vied with Communist shop stewards in clamouring for swift action to support the Russians. The newspaper barons included Beaverbrook, the vigorous Canadian, whose formidable status as a recent member of the War Cabinet lent special significance to his declaration in New York that "the war can be settled in 1942." The Soviet Ambassador to London made the same point with more asperity: "There is no time to wait until the last button is sewn to the uniform of the last soldier."

Churchill could hardly give a detailed account in public of the Allies' lack of resources. It was tough enough for him in private to convince the Americans that a landing in France was as yet beyond their joint capacity. The crunch came when Churchill returned to Washington again in July. The American Chiefs of Staff disagreed with the British view and proposed to switch operations to the Pacific if an invasion of Europe was ruled out. President Roosevelt, however, sided with Churchill. The approaching Congressional elections made a quick military victory as necessary to him as it was to Churchill. If it could not be won in France, declared Roosevelt, "then we must take second best – and that is not the Pacific." On July 25, 1942, he opted firmly in favour of a landing in North Africa – Operation Torch as it came to be called.

As planning for the enterprise began in London under General Eisenhower, the Allies received grim and incontestable evidence of what a premature attack in Europe would involve. During the previous two years, small-scale raids had been made on the German-held coastline by British Commando teams and highly trained specialist units. Taking the enemy by surprise and forcing a considerable dispersal of the German defence, they had been relatively successful. In the spring of 1942 the idea had taken root for another operation of the same kind, but mounted on such a scale that it might appear to the Germans as the forerunner of a major invasion attempt.

As the months passed, however, the original intention of confusing the enemy was obscured by the actual confusions – of objective and execution – which were affecting the planners. Was the intention to inflict the maximum casualties on the enemy? Was it to gain valuable experience of an opposed landing with Allied casualties counting only as a secondary factor? Or was it to establish a toehold on the mainland of Europe and, if so, with what purpose and for how long?

Since the Canadian government refused to allow their forces to be used in the Middle East, it was decided to allocate the Canadian division based in England for the European assault. As the planning developed, it became plain that very heavy sacrifices would be asked from those who actually went in on the ground, which made the choice of the Canadians somewhat unfortunate in the light of previous sacrifices by individual Dominion contingents: Australians in Greece; New Zealanders in Crete; South Africans at Tobruk; Indians at Matruh.

For tactical reasons, the planners decided to stage a head-on attack on a

defended port and they selected Dieppe as the objective. For political reasons they decided that the port should not be subjected to a saturation bombing attack, but that supporting fire-power should be provided by the 15-inch guns of British battleships lying out in the Channel. The Admiralty, however, refused to put its battleships at risk and the planners never made up the deficiency caused by their original cancellation of bomber support. In its final stages, therefore, the land element in the Dieppe operation was virtually foresaken by the planners. The inevitable result was disaster: over 60 per cent of the Canadian division was killed or captured in one day and none of its soldiers penetrated beyond the foreshore or the seawall.

One of the finest units in the Imperial Army had been crippled at a single stroke and it was to carry the scars for many months. Right up to the closing stages of the Battle of Normandy in 1944, much of the hesitation and clumsiness of the Canadian forces can be traced to this traumatic day in August, 1942. Even the R.A.F., which had claimed that the operation would "draw out" the Luftwaffe and give British planes the chance to break German fighter strength in the West, suffered defeat on its own terms, with a loss of nearly double that of the enemy.

The failure of the Dieppe raid convinced senior British military staff and, in particular, General Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, that an ill-considered frontal assault on the German-held coastline would be an act of pointless butchery. Most of them had been young subalterns in the First World War. Now the echoes of those terrible mass attacks across no-man's-land returned to haunt them. They had crippled the Empire for 20 years; a second dose, Brooke and his colleagues believed, would finish it for ever. As the American Secretary for the Army, Henry Stimson, observed, British military deliberations were conducted beneath the "shadows of Passchendaele."

The Americans had no such memories and, therefore, no such inhibitions. Their military leaders treated every British diversion to the Mediterranean with suspicion and continued, even after the bloody lesson of Dieppe, to press for a frontal assault across the Channel or a complete switch of American resources to the Pacific. Churchill resented the American attitude, complaining bitterly to Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador to Washington, that "Just because the Americans can't have a massacre in France this year, they want to sulk and bathe in the Pacific." This fundamental disagreement between the two Allies marked their strategic discussions throughout 1942 and 1943.

To begin with, the British got their way, largely because of Churchill's prestige, backed by longer experience and more skilful arguments and the fact that, in the late summer of 1942, British and imperial military strength still gave the appearance of superiority over that of the United States. R.A.F. Bomber Command was the only military instrument with which the West could reach the German mainland and its efforts – and casualties – contrasted impressively with the timid daylight sorties which the U.S. Air Force was making over France.

On October 23, 1942, Montgomery took the offensive against Rommel at El Alamein and by November 4 the Germans were in retreat, providing Churchill with the triumph of British arms that he had so long desired. Three days later, the Americans landed in French North Africa. Though strong in places, French resistance did not last for more than a few days and by the middle of the month all of French North Africa, except for Tunisia which the Axis forces were rapidly occupying, was in Allied hands. But the fumbling inexperience of the Americans had offered a spectacular contrast to the Eighth Army's rapid advance along the southern Mediterranean coastline and Churchill felt the time had come to pronounce against the critics of British imperialism, in America as well as at home. "I have not become the King's First Minister," he declared, "in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire."

Underlying much British sentiment was the idea that the imperial government was entitled to pursue its own course while laying claim to complete equality of power with America. But as 1943 wore on, such thinking was shown to be an illusion. In South Africa, political considerations, and in India and Australasia, military ones, led to the withdrawal of the bulk of their military contingents from the Middle East and the diminution of their governments' interest in the European conflict. Even the flow of trained air-crews from the Dominions, which had been sustaining R.A.F. Bomber Command's grievous casualty rate, began to slow down as new recruits took the option of flying from, and in defence of, their own homelands.

Economically, Britain also faced problems. As the enormous industrial potential of the United States became reality, Britain's own industrial and economic capacity was already stretched to the absolute limit. Except for Canada (which early in 1942 had made Britain a gift of $1,000 million), the Dominions were no longer able to satisfy British demands for they, too, had miscalculated in some sectors of their economic mobilization. Thus, for a whole range of necessary items – food, tobacco, machine tools – Britain could look to only one source – the United States. And when these requests were filed, it was often found that they had been pre-empted or reduced by similar requisitions from the Dominions.

In terms of military hardware, Britain's dependence on the United States was becoming even more critical. It was all very well for British Chiefs of Staff to advocate a specific strategic deployment, but ultimately every variant of strategy depended on shipping capacity and, in particular, on the availability of landing-craft. And from 1943 onwards, supplies of tanks, transport and fuel were all predominantly American. Only in design and production of military aircraft did Britain remain totally independent (and superior) until the end of the war.

By 1943 it had become clear, therefore, that the end of British stategic independence was near. Britain had run through her currency reserves and the Americans, armed by the Lend-Lease Agreement, were refusing to allow fresh accumulations. Debts had been allowed to rise to £2,000 million; exports had shrunk to a trickle. By March, the Battle of the Atlantic was at its height, with 477,000 tons of shipping sunk in that month alone. Such a "wastage" rate was beyond the capacity of the British yards to replace, but the new American shipbuilders could

take it in their stride. Thus, while the British merchant fleet dwindled at an accelerating rate, the American one continued to multiply.

In 1943 Britain also faced trouble on the industrial front. The labour force declined by 150,000 as the population aged and the declining birth-rate between the wars – itself a product of the casualties of the First World War – took effect. The passing of immediate danger and humiliation still left "total" victory depressingly remote and a mood of disenchantment among the civilian population was apparent. In the perilous months of 1940 the number of working days lost in strikes and lockouts had been the lowest ever recorded. But the number in 1943 was the highest for eight years – and the situation continued to worsen. A study of women factory workers in 1944 found: "The majority of them are so little interested in the war that they do not care whether their work is important to it or not." The popular Press reflected this general dissatisfaction and anti-government candidates fought – and on two occasions won – by-elections.

The last thing in most people's minds was the Empire. It no longer yielded any visible benefit and in Britain there was a dim but pervasive impression that resources which might speed the end of the war (for to the British people, the "war" meant the war against Germany) were being needlessly diverted. Even in Italy, where British and American troops were actually at grips with the Germans, the campaign had bogged down.

The time had now come for the Allies to resolve their plans for the Second Front. Many on the British side still doubted the wisdom of gambling everything on a frontal assault against the daily increasing strength of the German Atlantic Wall. But against this a new, unspoken, but widely shared feeling began to make itself felt. The Russians had smashed the Germans at Stalingrad in February, 1943, and again in the summer at Kursk. As the year wore on, it would be only a matter of time before the Red Army moved towards western Europe. The Germans would be unable to stop them; the only thing that might would be an inter-Allied agreement backed up by an Anglo-American army moving from an opposite direction. The wheel had come full circle: once considered essential to avert Russia's defeat, an Allied landing in France had now become the vital means of preventing the Soviet victory from being too complete and menacing.

Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin met together for the first time at the Teheran Conference in December, 1943. Each must have had his private reservations, not openly expressed or recorded in the minutes. But the essential strategic question was settled: Operation Overlord – the invasion of northern France – would definitely take place in the spring of 1944.

The landing on June 6 came not a moment too soon. For Germany, though hard-pressed by the Russians, was by no means finished. Her war production was increasing and a whole range of sophisticated weapons – "Schnorkel" U-boats, jet aircraft and two different kinds of ballistic missile – were on the point of becoming operational. If the D-Day landings had been as ill-prepared as the Dieppe raid, there can be little doubt that the anti-German Alliance would have collapsed and the British Empire would have been exposed to perils even greater than those of 1942. But the costly lesson of Dieppe had finally been learned.

The D-Day assault went in with tremendous force and sustained by a great variety of specialized weapons. Amphibious tanks and flame-throwers, artifical harbours, cross-Channel fuel pipe-lines and sheer weight of metal – 13,000 aircraft and 4,000 assault vessels – were backed by over 1,000 British and American fighting ships.

There was never any possibility of the enemy stemming the assault on the beaches as they had at Dieppe. Their only chance was to outwit the Allied forces in the set-piece battles to follow. But here, again, sheer weight of men and armour and Allied domination of the air gradually wore the Germans down until their front cracked. At this point, with total victory seemingly so close, political considerations surfaced and affected Allied tactics.

The original deployment in Normandy had placed the British and Canadians on the left flank where, by a series of plodding frontal attacks, they slowly attracted the mass of German Panzer strength into

continued on p. 2162

Australia's Pacific War

On May 4, 1943, Admiral Shigeyoshi Inouye led a Japanese invasion fleet against Port Moresby, the Australian base in New Guinea and the shield of the Australian homeland, 300 miles to the south. This move and the eight-months campaign that followed showed clearly that Australia could no longer rely upon the Empire for her defence, but must look to her own resources and seek aid from a stronger ally – America.

Driven off at first by an American carrier squadron, the Japanese returned in July and landed on the north-eastern tail of this bird-shaped island. Pushing back local troops, the enemy seized the key pass in the rugged Owen Stanley mountain range and advanced to within 17 miles of Port Moresby. Australian and American troops then counter-attacked and in savage fighting in the swampy gloom, drove the Japanese back to a massive jungle fortress on the coast. Here, after further fierce battles, the enemy was finally overcome at Sanananda Point on January 23, 1944.

American and Australian gunners hammer away

Australian troops cross a frail bamboo bridge over a crocodile-infested stream during the last phase of the fight for New Guinea early in 1943.

in torrential rain at Japanese positions around Sanananda in 1942.

Australians defend a forward position in the New Guinea swamps.

their sector, giving General George C. Patton's highly mobile American 3rd Army the chance to break through on the right flank. The plan was Montgomery's and, as at Alamein, it worked – though somewhat later than had been hoped. But once the Germans cracked and the front broadened, command of Allied land forces reverted from Montgomery (who took over the British and Canadians) to Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander.

In those critical days of July and August, 1944, what was needed was a single-minded military intellect capable of exploiting the opportunities presented by Montgomery's plan. Patton was already tearing through the French countryside, making 40 to 60 miles a day. In front of him there was virtually no opposition: an agonized enquiry in the telephone log of the German High Command shows that all they could call on were five tank destroyers under repair in the workshops at Sennenlager. If Patton had been kept supplied, he could have driven to Berlin or Prague or, indeed, to Warsaw, where the S.S. were completing the liquidation of the Polish Resistance.

But Eisenhower did not possess a single-minded military intellect. He considered not only the military situation, but the susceptibilities of British public opinion and the private ambitions of his individual army commanders. His conclusion was that the Allies should advance on a "broad" front and the easiest way to achieve this was by restricting the allocation of supplies to the various armies on a strictly equal basis. Patton's tanks simply ground to a halt when their fuel ran out and their crews stood around waiting for the other Allied armies to catch up.

Montgomery now came forward with another plan. He proposed that Allied airborne forces (which had not yet been committed) should seize a bridgehead over the Lower Rhine at Arnhem and Nijmegen, in the Netherlands, and that an armoured thrust should follow on to the German plain. Patton had been the real key to an instant Allied victory in the summer of 1944 and the new plan was very much a second-best. But there was a chance of it succeeding and that chance had to be taken because, for Britain, an end to the war was now even more crucial.

Exactly one week after the D-Day landings, the first of the German flying-bombs or V.1s fell on south-east England. Soon, a hundred a day were raining down, mainly on London. Effective defensive measures were not found until August, by which time more than 6,000 people had been killed and over a million evacuated from the capital. In September Londoners faced a new ordeal – bombardment by V.2s, long-range rockets fired from occupied parts of the Continent. Unable to shoot them down, the British had to seek out and destroy their launching-pads.

It was against this background that Montgomery's Rhine plan was considered – and approved. But luck, which had been running against the Germans, suddenly turned in their favour. Bad weather, traitors in the Dutch Resistance, last-minute changes of command, muddled radio frequencies, all played their part in frustrating the heroic but desperate operation carried out in the second week of September. An American airborne division seized the Nijmegen bridge without difficulty. But the British, who had the most perilous task – that of holding the Arnhem crossing, deep in enemy territory – at once found themselves in difficulties.

Probably no British unit, including the Commandos, fought as long and as fiercely as the First Airborne Division at Arnhem. Trained for four years, inculcated with a proud sense of élitism and aware that somehow the course of the war rested on their performance, these men held off the whole of an S.S. Panzer army for ten days. Hammered by close-in artillery and mortar-fire and with food and ammunition exhausted, 2,200 survivors were evacuated across the River Lek in assault-boats on September 25. They left behind 7,000 of their comrades, killed, wounded or captured.

It was the last cruel, private confrontation between the Germans and the British. It was the enemy's belated revenge on land for that private and critical defeat which they had suffered in the skies above England exactly four years earlier. With the failure of Arnhem, stalemate followed in the West. The setback, declared Eisenhower, "was ample evidence that much bitter campaigning was to come." Nor was there relief from the East, where the Red Army was too busy digesting the Balkans to pay much attention to the German front.

A week before the Arnhem offensive, Churchill met Roosevelt in Quebec. An early end to the war in Europe still seemed possible and the Prime Minister was anxious to concert plans with the President for future operations in the Far East. After overrunning Burma in May, 1942, the Japanese had encountered vigorous Allied reprisals. General Orde Wingate's long-range penetration groups – the Chindits – harassed them from India and Chiang Kai-shek's American-trained forces pinned down a third of their men along the Sino-Burmese border. The Japanese had cut the Burma road to China, but Chiang Kai-shek's troops were kept supplied by an air ferry service which the Allies operated over the Himalayas – the famous "Hump."

In August, 1943, a major Allied offensive had started and was entering its final phase in March, 1944, when the Japanese, supported by the so-called Indian National Army, had suddenly invaded Assam to begin the long-heralded "March on Delhi." In June they had been defeated at Imphal, inside the Indian border, at a cost of nearly 40,000 men and 16,000 Empire troops, and Britain now looked forward to recovering Burma and all her other lost imperial territories in Asia. The Americans, however, were more interested in pursuing their own successful campaign against the Japanese in the Central Pacific and this raised two immensely difficult problems for Churchill.

He warned senior colleagues that if the Americans alone were responsible for driving the Japanese from Malaya and the East Indies, the United States might demand "a dominating say in their future," and gain control of their oil. Above all, the Prime Minister was concerned that if the Americans pursued an independent campaign against the Japanese, they might end the Lend-Lease arrangements without which Britain would be incapable of sustaining, not only her operations in the Far East, but the whole British economy in its transition

from war to peace. Churchill therefore considered it vital to secure a major Pacific role for the Royal Navy, and immediately on arriving in Quebec announced to Roosevelt that "the British Empire [is] ardent to play the greatest possible part" in the defeat of Japan.

As a token of this ardour, Churchill offered the British main fleet for "major operations against Japan under United States Supreme Command." The U.S. Navy Commander-in-Chief, Admiral E. J. King, argued that there was neither the need nor the bases for British ships and clearly suspected that Churchill would try to interfere in strategy. But Roosevelt, anxious to strengthen Anglo-American relations for the joint enterprise in Europe, accepted the offer. Britain was also promised American support for the campaign in Burma and secured further Lend-Lease worth $3,500 million for the war against Japan and a credit of $3,000 million for non-military purposes.

In February, 1945, the two men met again, this time at Yalta, in the Crimea, in the presence of Stalin. The atmosphere was very different to the one which had prevailed at Quebec. Allied victory in Europe had then seemed near. But the surprise German offensive in the Ardennes in December had demonstrated the extraordinary recuperative powers of the German Army. Although the offensive had been halted and pushed back, victory in the West had receded. It was Stalin, with 300 divisions poised for a fresh offensive on the Eastern Front, who now promised the road to German defeat and Roosevelt was determined to secure the Soviet dictator's collaboration and aid.

Stalin promised further military action against the Germans, undertook to enter the war against Japan within three months of the German surrender and supported most of Roosevelt's proposals for the United Nations Organization. In return, he was promised large slices of Japanese territory and the lion's share of German war reparations. Soviet nominees were also recognized as the provisional government of Poland with the proviso that non-Communists should be included and that free elections should take place as soon as possible. Churchill had many reservations about the deal, but could do little other than accept it. The representatives of the United States and the Soviet Union had power; that of His Britannic Majesty did not.

In these last months of the war the British people turned in on themselves. They thought mainly of social security, housing and full employment. The armed forces were permeated by "discussion" groups whose spokesmen, drawn from the Left, aired and fomented popular grievances in a kind of socio-economic jargon that at the time seemed fresh and inspiring. The old concepts of Empire and the flag, with which such popular poets and chroniclers as Kipling, Henty and Buchan had sustained national self-esteem, were no longer mentioned except as objects of ridicule on account of their association with "privilege" and the old order.

By 1945, then, Britain's status (as distinct from her prestige) as a world power rested largely on bluff. She had no economic assets, her armed forces were over-stretched, and what leverage she could exert depended on the diplomatic skill of her political leaders. These changed abruptly in the middle of the European peace conference at Potsdam in July when the British General Election results were declared and Clement Attlee, Churchill's wartime deputy, became Prime Minister of a Labour government.

A major question of imperial policy remained to be settled. Were the economic wealth and trading potential of Britain's enormous possessions in the Far East worth the strain of the major military effort that was (it seemed) necessary to wrest them from the Japanese? On May 2 British troops had reoccupied Rangoon and Churchill had approved draft plans for an invasion of Malaya and the Dutch East Indies under Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten's command later in the year. Whether Attlee would have proceeded with these is doubtful.

Churchill had also wanted imperial forces to take part in the invasion of the Japanese Home Islands, provisionally set for March, 1946. The American Pacific Commander, General Douglas MacArthur, grudgingly agreed to the inclusion in the assault forces of one British, one Canadian and one Australian division, which were to be trained in American methods of warfare and were to use American equipment and supplies.

In the event, all was decided at Hiroshima: the British returned to their Far Eastern Empire by courtesy of American power, though MacArthur did at least give Mountbatten permission to receive the Japanese surrender in South-East Asia in Singapore on September 12. The business-as-usual sign flickered on again at the Colonial Office, but there were few who were any longer interested in buying the goods.

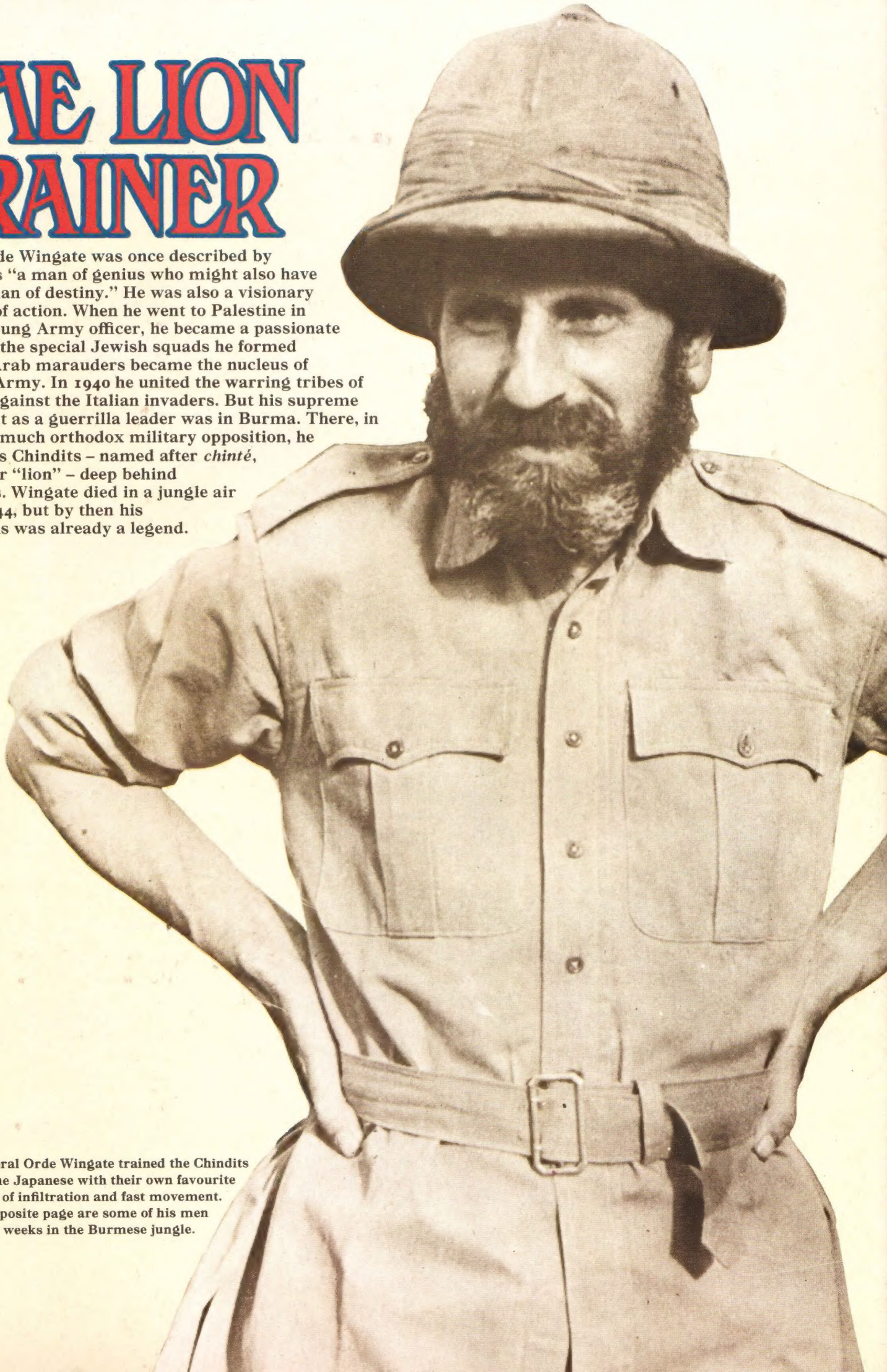
The reputation of the British government – indeed, of all colonial governments – had been severely shaken, not by the inability of imperial leaders and military commanders to withstand the onslaught of a great Asian power, but by their apparent acceptance of outdated notions of Western superiority. Had the British returned on the tide of a military victory of their own making, they might at least have won the respect of their subjects. As it was, they provoked outright hostility or mere indifference.

At home, the British people, who for the most part had supposed the British Empire to be founded firmly upon the loyalty of the indigenous inhabitants, were in no mood for gunboats and glory when they found it was not. With all American aid cut off from the time of Japan's collapse, they had problems enough of their own to face in Britain. Hugh Dalton, Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, summed up the mood of his fellow countrymen with prosaic but forceful clarity: "If you are in a place where you are not wanted and where you have not got the force to squash those who don't want you, the only thing to do is to come out."

The self-governing Dominions had also acquired new international status and assertiveness. They had stood as free and equal nations with Britain, for a year alone, and from first to last, against the Axis powers. If the days of colonialism were seemingly numbered, the idea of Commonwealth had acquired new significance. It remained to be seen how far the idea could by trade, tariff, or defence survive the turbulent aftermath of war.

THE LION TRAINER

General Orde Wingate was once described by Churchill as "a man of genius who might also have become a man of destiny." He was also a visionary and a man of action. When he went to Palestine in 1936 as a young Army officer, he became a passionate Zionist and the special Jewish squads he formed to combat Arab marauders became the nucleus of the Israeli Army. In 1940 he united the warring tribes of Abyssinia against the Italian invaders. But his supreme achievement as a guerrilla leader was in Burma. There, in the teeth of much orthodox military opposition, he launched his Chindits – named after *chinté*, Burmese for "lion" – deep behind enemy lines. Wingate died in a jungle air crash in 1944, but by then his force of lions was already a legend.



General Orde Wingate trained the Chindits to beat the Japanese with their own favourite tactics of infiltration and fast movement. On the opposite page are some of his men after weeks in the Burmese jungle.

The map shows the Allied offensive against the Japanese armies in Burma early in 1945. The Chindits were landed behind enemy lines and in advance of the main offensive by gliders.

The Lions Prepare

In mid 1942, after the Japanese had surged across Burma, Orde Wingate, then a Colonel, was given charge of guerrilla operations behind enemy lines. Wingate's brigade, trained in India for its secret mission, found him a hard task-master.

Officers and men alike – British, Burmese and Ghurkas – were made to work for hours at the double. They were learning to overcome two enemies; one was the Japanese – the other, the jungle.

Leeches which gorge on human blood, mosquitoes and flies which cause painful sores, the gloom and humidity which together lower men's spirits and their will to fight – all these Wingate taught his men to endure. And he firmly discouraged sick parades, arguing that they were admissions of weakness which could lead on to capture and even death.

Wingate's objective was to disrupt the Japanese army by creating havoc behind its lines. This would restore the shattered morale of Empire forces, who had come to regard the Japanese as invincible jungle fighters, and prepare the way for an eventual major offensive.

"Granted the power to maintain forces by air and direct them by wireless," he wrote, "it is possible to operate regular ground forces for indefinite periods in the heart of enemy occupied territory to the peril of his war machine." This theory was soon to be put to the test.

Men of the King's African Rifles (above) board the plane that will fly them to a secret air-strip deep in the heart of Japanese-controlled territory. Pack-mules (left) were essential for moving bulky supplies through the trackless jungle of Burma.

A British transport plane flies with vital supplies to a Chindit drop zone in the jungle. while a machine-gunner keeps a sharp lookout for low-flying enemy aircraft.

Parachutes loaded with crates of food and ammunition float down to a drop zone. These were usually indicated by coloured smoke, signal lamp or coded letters on the ground.

The Lions Pounce

Wingate launched his first expedition into Burma in February, 1943. It was to have been co-ordinated with an assault from the north by Chiang Kai-shek's forces, but this was cancelled and Wingate was allowed to go ahead on his own. So, on the night of February 18, 3,000 men crossed the Chindwin River into enemy territory. Sunrise, wrote one of their officers, "revealed naked men fighting madly with plunging mules, tiny boats rocking precariously as Ghurkas loaded them with precious Bren guns, mortars and rifles." In April, having lost a third of his men, Wingate withdrew the survivors to India. The military value of the operation is still disputed. But it did prove beyond question that Empire troops could raid effectively behind enemy lines and that the Japanese were as mortal in the jungle as any other fighting men.

Wingate (left) gazes up hopefully into the night sky, watching for the approach of a British plane over the secret Chindit air-strip. A signaller with an electric lamp waits to flash the aircraft down.

Nets worn by American-trained Chinese troops over their helmets as protection against insects were scorned by Wingate's tough and jungle-seasoned guerrilla units.

A Chindit mortar crew in Australian bush hats sight their weapon with care before opening up on nearby Japanese positions.

A dishevelled column of grim-faced Chindits, close to total exhaustion after weeks of fighting in intense heat, carry a wounded comrade along a forest path.

Madman or Genius?

After Wingate's death early in 1944, his second and bigger Chindit expedition fought on, first under General W.D.A. Lentaigne and later under the American General "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell, who had led a Sino-American force into northern Burma. On August 3 these Allied units succeeded in taking the Japanese stronghold of Myitkyina. But by now the Chindits were exhausted and Lentaigne resented Stilwell's assertion that they could have fought more vigorously. Later that month they were withdrawn.

Opinion has been divided ever since about their value. The military establishment have cast Wingate in the image of a brave but irresponsible lunatic who made no serious impact on the enemy. But according to the Japanese commander in Central Burma, the Chindits tied down his men when only one regiment would have turned the scales in his favour at the decisive Battle of Kohima.

Indians fighting with the Chindits are briefed by their British officer. Some Indians also fought for the Japanese, hoping to liberate their countrymen from British domination.

Chindits prepare to blow up a Burmese rail line used by the Japanese for moving supplies and reinforcements. Disruption of enemy communications was one of Wingate's main aims.

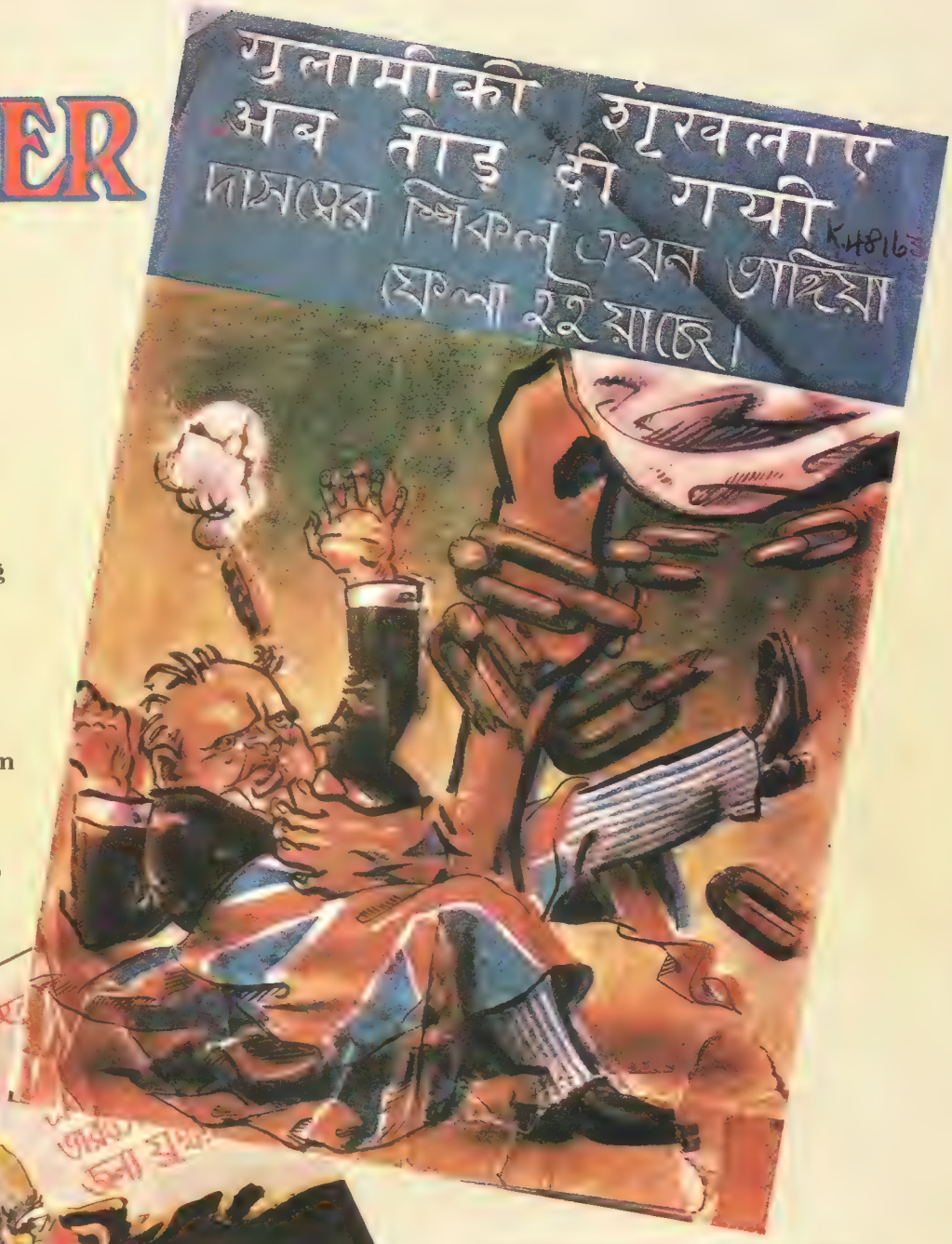
A tattered Chindit does sentry duty. Weeks in jungle thickets tore light-weight bush jackets to ribbons and made scarecrows of smart, spit-and-polish soldiers.

THE OTHER WAR

The struggle for territory in the Far East was reflected in a propaganda struggle for men's minds. The posters and leaflets on these and the following pages exemplify Japanese efforts to win over Indians and Australian appeals to New Guinea natives.

When the war began, many Indian nationalists saw their chance of wringing independence from the hard pressed British. After seizing Malaya, the Japanese tried to exploit this national sentiment in propaganda leaflets. Printed in Hindi and Bengali, they were smuggled into the country from Burma by pro-Japanese Indians and passed from hand to hand in villages and bazaars.

The campaign was not a success. All nationalists wished to be rid of the British Raj, but few were willing to swap one form of imperialist domination for another.



Breaking his chains, an Indian stamps on Churchill. "The bondage of slavery," proclaims the caption, "is shattered."

A devilish Churchill holds two quarrelling Indians in his talons. "Unite for Freedom!" they are horted. "Division is British policy."

The Raj faces revolt. "All British colonies are awake. Why must Indians stay slaves? Seize this chance – rise!"

Undeterred by sinking British warships, Churchill whips forward a shackled Indian soldier. The caption asks: "Why fight Japan?"

This poster, displayed outside public buildings of villages recaptured from the Japanese, shows loyal villagers and police gathered round the patriotic symbols of Australia's King and Flag. The caption declares in pidgin English: "The Government has come back again."

Beware the Puk-Puk Men!

In September, 1942, Australia launched a campaign of psychological warfare against the Japanese invaders of neighbouring New Guinea, who were threatening the Australian base of Port Moresby. The main object of the campaign was to stiffen the loyalty of the native Papuans and to prevent them from being subverted by the enemy.

It was fought with millions of leaflets which were scattered from aircraft and written in Japanese, Chinese, Malay and the widely spoken pidgin English. Japanese soldiers were assured of their impending and inevitable defeat, while the Papuans were urged to look after crashed Australian airmen whom they found in the jungles and to oppose the "puk-puk men" (crocodile men) as the Japanese were insultingly described.

Papuans are urged to drive out the enemy by the end of 1942. "Four months have already gone and eight remain. You must be ready to aid our forces. Government, he talk."

OL BOI BILOG GAVMAN.

YUMI MAS RAUSIM OL JAPAN LONG DISPELA YIA.
POR PELA MUN I LUS PINIS. EIT PELA I STAP.
YU MAS REDI LONG HALIPIM MIPELA.

GAVMAN I TOK

Policemen who hid among village natives when the Japanese arrived receive some advice from the Australians. "Now the Government calls these police to come and join us. There will not be any trouble."

LUKIM NUMBA

TAIM JAPAN I KAMAP. PLENTI POLISBOI I KOAIT LONG KANAKA. GUT PELA PASIN. NAU GAVMAN SIGAUT IM OL KAM PUTIM NUMBA GEN. YU KAM PAINIM MIPELA. I NOGAT TROBEL.

GAVMAN I TOK

A poster in pidgin English foretells the defeat of Japan and pledges that the Government will make everyone happy.

Japan bugger up finish. Altogether Japan man fraid too much, now all e like run away.

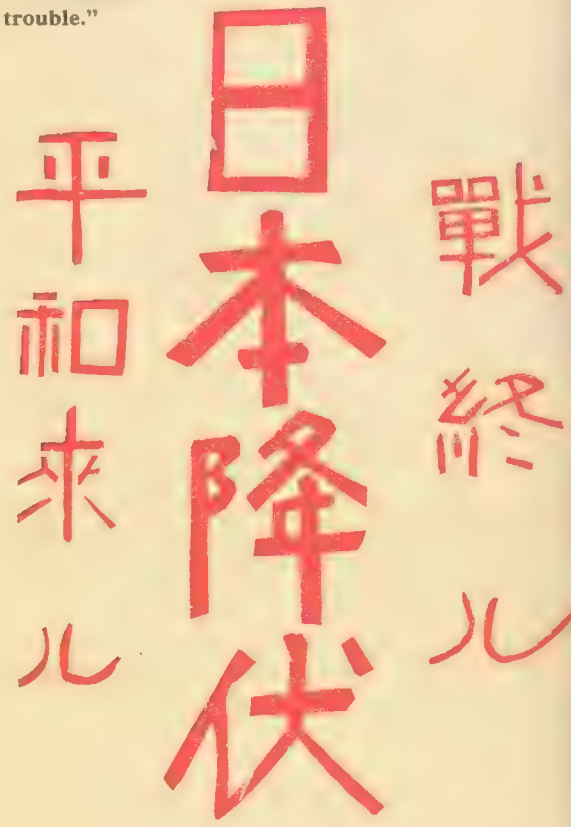
Close up fight finish now. England and America must win im because two fella strong altogether.

By-n-by Govment makim good fashion along you fella, now you fella happy too much. Wait liklik time das all.

Sipos yu lukim won fella balus bilong yumi e come down long Sorawara, kisim masta nau look out im good.

All right, talk im e finish now.

Kiap goodbye along you fella.



A poster in Japanese proclaims the victory of Empire forces. "Japan has surrendered. The war has ended. Peace has come."

OPERATION OVERLORD

While India, Australia and New Zealand concentrated their resources against the Japanese, Britain, Canada and America planned the time of reckoning in Europe. By May, 1944, 800,000 men were poised in southern England for history's biggest amphibious assault. They knew that final victory in the unrelenting struggle against Nazi Germany could come only from an invasion of the massively fortified Channel coast of France – what Hitler called the Atlantic Wall. General Dwight Eisenhower, supreme Allied commander, and General Sir Bernard Montgomery, commanding the initial landings, misled the Germans about the location of the attack – code-named "Operation Overlord." Landing on the beaches of Normandy on June 6, the Allies smashed through German defences in a day, establishing bridgeheads from which to thrust forward into the rest of France. These pages highlight the role of Canadian troops in the grim but gallant saga.

Montgomery (right) surveys the Normandy beaches.

A week after D-Day, Allied ships and landing-craft continue to cross the Channel beneath a protective umbrella of barrage balloons.

Hundreds of American tanks choke the fields of southern England awaiting transportation across the Channel and action in France.

Anti-tank guns lie at an ordnance depot in southern England on the eve of D-Day. Within weeks they were pounding German armour.

Bombs stockpiled at an airfield in East Anglia were rained on to the enemy in France in support of the Allied invasion forces.

Into the Assault

Operation Overlord was an unparalleled military achievement. More than 160,000 men with vast quantities of equipment crossed the Channel in rough weather, landed on a 50-mile front against desperate opposition and won substantial footholds in less than 24 hours at the cost of only 11,000 casualties.

But the units of the U.S. 1st and 3rd, Canadian 1st and British 2nd Armies, which comprised the invading force, all endured moments of possible defeat. For two Canadian brigades these occurred at 0800 hours as they flung themselves ashore at Courselle-sur-Mer. Rough seas sank amphibious tanks and swamped landing-craft so that the assault was below strength. From surviving strong-points the Germans fought back fiercely, pinning the Canadians down on the beaches until Naval artillery came to their aid. Then, against still bitter opposition, the Canadians advanced and took their objectives. Alan Morehead, the New Zealand war correspondent and writer, describes in his book, *Eclipse*, the shambles after the attack. "This was no normal French beach, but a wasteland pitted with thousands of craters and shell-holes. The villas were only shells, their insides blown out.

"The roofs of the farmhouses had tumbled in. The pillboxes and concrete trenches had been wrenched about by the fantastic violence of the barrage. . . . The dead lay about the blackened entrances."

Canadian troops wade calmly ashore at Ver-sur-Mer, Normandy, on June 18, 1944. Opposition had been crushed 12 days before during the assaults of D-Day.

A French mother watches Canadian troops advance in Normandy.

Triumph in Normandy

Three phases marked the Normandy battles: first, the landings and consolidation of bridgeheads; second, constant attacks against the enemy while Allied reinforcements and supplies came ashore; third, the break-out from the bridgeheads and the destruction of forces under Field-Marshal Günther von Kluge, the German Commander-in-Chief. Thanks to a fatal error on the part of the Germans, all three phases were successfully achieved. Instead of massing his forces for an immediate counter-offensive, von Kluge threw them piecemeal against the invaders.

Finally, on August 7, Hitler personally ordered five Panzer divisions towards the Normandy town of Avranches in an attempt to cut U.S. General George S. Patton's communications. They were stopped mainly by rocket-firing R.A.F. Typhoons, which knocked out nearly 100 tanks in a day. Grabbing his chance, Montgomery ordered Canadian, British and American forces to encircle the Germans and by August 13 the German 7th Army was trapped in the Falaise-Argentan region south of Caen. In the battle that followed, the enemy lost 10,000 dead and 50,000 prisoners. "The best of von Kluge's army came here *en masse* 48 hours ago," Alan Morehead reported. "And now, here in the apple orchards and the village streets, one turns sick to see what has happened to them." Von Kluge committed suicide and the remainder of his men who escaped capture retreated pell-mell across France.

Canadians enter Caen after savage Allied air attacks. Some 7,000 tons of bombs dropped on the ancient town in 20 minutes.

Snipers are hunted out. As the junction of 12 German supply roads, Caen was defended by the enemy with fanatical fury.

A young German infantryman cheerfully surrenders to Canadians after the Allied break-out from Normandy. His comrades are forced to line up against the wall.

Men of the Royal Canadian Engineers pause in Calvados – Normandy home of the apple liqueur – beside the signposts for Caen. It was not until July 13 that German resistance in the town finally ceased.

Battle for the Rhineland

From February 8 until March 21, 1945, the Canadian 1st, British 2nd and U.S. 9th Armies fought under Montgomery's command for possession of the Rhineland. The first major battle to occur inside Germany itself, it was waged not only in bitter cold, but in mud and floodwaters, for Field-Marshal Gerd von Runstedt, the German Commander-in-Chief, had destroyed the Roer River dams, innundating the countryside and delaying the American advance for two weeks.

The British and Canadians pushed on and met stubborn resistance from the German 1st Parachute Army, which threw in all its reserves against General Crerar's Canadians. "The volume of fire," noted Montgomery, "was the heaviest which had so far been met by British troops." Eventually, after sustaining 90,000 casualties, the Germans were driven from the west bank of the Rhine. On the night of March 23–24 the Allies crossed the river, joining up with the Soviets at Torgau on April 25. Twelve days later the Germans surrendered.

A Sherman tank of the Canadian South Alberta Regiment churns through deep mud near Calcar in March, 1945, during the furious six-week battle for the Rhineland.

A Canadian N.C.O. pauses thoughtfully in February, 1945, beside a warning sign placed just inside the German frontier. His next objective is the River Rhine.

Troops of the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders cross the icy waters of the Rhine as part of the Canadian assault on March 24.

Men of the Canadian Algonquin Regiment push on through the bleak and freezing countryside close to the Swiss border.

Armoured cars of the 4th Canadian Division halt in the Hochwald Forest, near Sonsbeck.

Jubilant Londoners crowd Whitehall on VE-Day, May 8, 1945, to celebrate the triumph over Nazi Germany. Celebrations went on into the small hours – though not everyone felt able to join in. "Here and there, in sheltering darkness," noted one observer, "stood lonely, living ghosts – a repatriated prisoner dazed by the garish clamour and by the sudden accessibility of women . . . a young American, wounded in Germany and due for discharge, bitterly dreading his return to . . . the instability of civilian life."

Officer, 15th The King's Hussars, 1807